

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

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AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 REYKJAVIK 0468

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IC, US

SUBJECT: ANNUAL POLICY ASSESSMENT: ICELAND

REF: STATE 032826

1. SUMMARY: ALL INVOLVED WITH ICELANDIC AFFAIRS MUST HAVE DONE SOMETHING RIGHT LAST YEAR. OUR OVERRIDING OBJECTIVES WERE (A) TO ENSURE THE RETENTION OF THE US MANNED ICELAND DEFENSE FORCE (IDF) AND UNDER CONDITIONS WHICH DO NOT IMPAIR ITS MISSION; AND (B) TO ENSURE THAT ICELAND REMAINS A MEMBER OF NATO. WITH LOTS OF HELP FROM
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ALL INTERESTED PARTIES, STATESIDE AND ELSEWHERE, INCLUDING

THE ICELANDIC VOTERS, THESE TWO MAJOR OBJECTIVES WERE ACHIEVED DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY WITH THE SIGNING LAST OCTOBER OF A NEW US-ICELAND DEFENSE UNDERSTANDING. OUT OBJECTIVES FOR THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS REMAIN THE SAME. OUR STRATEGY IS TO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT IN ICELAND WHICH WILL PRECLUDE THE INVOKING BY ICELAND AGAIN OF THE TERMINATION CLAUSE (ARTICLE VII) OF OUR DEFENSE AGREEMENT. TACTICS TO CREATE SUCH AN ENVIRONMENT CALL FOR (A) CONTINUED COOPERATION ON THE PART OF ALL USG AGENCIES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW DEFENSE UNDERSTANDING (MOU) WITH THE SAME VIGOR AND CALCULATED ACTIONS THAT BROUGHT ABOUT THE NEW MOU; AND (B) COOPERATING WITH PRO-IDF ELEMENTS IN ICELAND IN A NEW PSYCHOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL OFFENSIVE.

END SUMMARY.

2. OTHER US OBJECTIVES IN ICELAND, UT NOT UNIQUE TO ICELAND; ARE: (A) TO ENCOURAGE ICELAND TO VOTE POSITIONS IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS BASED ON THE MERITS OF THE ISSUES AND TO COUNTER A TENDENCY TO ABSTAIN IN CRUCIAL VOTES; (B) TO ENCOURAGE COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES IN ICELAND FOR US EFFORTS AND (WHICH APPEARS TO BE MORE DIFFICULT) TO ENCOURAGE US BUSINESS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THESE OPPORTUNITIES; (C) IN GENERAL, TO MAINTAIN CLOSE, FRIENDLY BILATERAL RELATIONS OF A POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL NATURE; AND (D) TO PURSUE ALL OF THE USG OBJECTIVES WITHOUT A RAID ON THE US TREASURY.

3. THINGS ARE GOING WELL, BUT THERE ARE SOME SENSITIVE AREAS. TO ACHIEVE A LONG PEACEFUL PERIOD ON US-ICELAND DEFENSE RELATIONS WILL DEPEND BOTH ON THE SURVIVAL OF THE PRESENT INDEPENDENCE PARTY-PROGRESSIVE PARTY COALITION GOVT IN ICELAND AND ON THE USG KEEPING CLEARLY IN MIND THE BASIC PREMISES THAT LED TO A SUCCESSFUL MOU, NAMELY (A) THAT THE USG WILL NOT UNILATERALLY MAKE DECISIONS REGARDING THE COMPOSITION OR STRUCTURE OF THE IDF WHICH COULD BE CONSTRUED BY THE PRESENT GOI LEADERSHIP AS ADVERSELY AFFECTING THE DEFENSE OF ICELAND; AND (B) THAT THE USG WILL IMPLEMENT THE NEW MOU EXPEDITIOUSLY AND IN GOOD FAITH, AVOIDING ACTIONS OF OMISSION OR COMMISSION WHICH COULD EMBARRASS THOSE GOVT CONFIDENTIAL

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LEADERS AND OTHER ICELANDERS WHO SUPPORT A CLOSE US-ICELAND RELATIONSHIP.

4. STABILITY OF THE COALITION: THE ELECTIONS OF JUNE 30, 1974 RESULTED IN A STANDOFF BETWEEN THE PREVIOUS COALITION PARTNERS (PP, PA AND OLL) AND THE OPPOSITION PARTIES (IP AND SDP) AND MADE NECESSARY A LONG PERIOD OF NEGOTIATION BEFORE THE IP-PP GOVT WAS FINALLY FORMED IN LATE AUGUST.

THE FORMATION OF ANOTHER LEFTIST GOVT UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE PP WAS FORESTALLED BY THE SDP, WHO, WHILE CHOOSING, AFTER THE ELECTIONS, TO DISTANCE THEMSELVES FROM THE INDEPENDENCE PARTY AND TO RESTORE THEIR LEFTIST CREDENTIALS, NEVERTHELESS REFUSED TO HELP FORM A NEW LAEFT COALITION BECAUSE OF THE STAND TAKEN BY THESE PARTIES TO CALL FOR CHANGES IN THE US-ICELAND DEFENSE RELATIONSHIP WHICH WOULD HAVE SERIOUSLY IMPAIRED THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE IDF. THE WORSENING ECONOMIC SITUATION IN ICELAND; THE ADVANTAGES SEEN BY THE MAJORITY OF THE PP OF LETTING IP SHARE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE INEVITABLE UNPOPULAR ECONOMIC MEASURES THE NEW GOVT WOULD HAVE TO IMPOSE (AND WHICH CAUSED THE DOWNFALL OF THE PREVIOUS PP-LED LEFTIST GOVT); AND DISTASTE AMONG THE POLITICAL PARTIES FOR EITHER ANOTHER ELECTION OR A GOVT OF TECHNICIANS (AS WOULD HAVE BEEN THE ONLY OTHER RECOURSES), WERE ALL FACTORS THAT BROUGHT TOGETHER THESE TWO PARTIES. IN THE EIGHT MONTHS TO DATE OF THIS COALITION, THE PARTNERS HAVE DISPLAYED MORE COMPATIBILITY THAN THE HISTORY OF THEIR INTENSE RIVALRY WOULD HAVE SUGGESTED LIKELY. IF, HOWEVER, THE PP WERE TO HAVE HANDED TO THEM, BY GRATUITOUS CIRCUMSTANCES, AN OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE OVER THE GOVT LEADERSHIP, THEY WOULD NOT HESITATE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IT AND WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY TRY TO REESTABLISH THEIR LEFTIST CREDENTIALS. BOTH PARTIES HAVE MAVERICKS WHO CAN CAUSE SUCH OPPORTUNITIES TO ARISE, BUT RESPONSIBLE LEADERS OF BOTH PARTIES ARE EXERTING MAXIMUM EFFORT TO KEEP THEM UNDER CONTROL. THESE LEADERS CANNOT, HOWEVER, PREVENT SERIOUS EMBARRASSMENT TO THEIR COALITION FROM EXTERNAL SOURCES, SUCH AS FROM THE USG, AND HAVE EXPRESSED TO ME ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS THEIR APPREHENSIONS ON THIS SCORE.

5. THEIR APPREHENSIONS, WHICH THEY HAVE IDENTIFIED AS NOT CONFIDENTIAL

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ONLY AFFECTING THE STABILITY OF THE COALITION, BUT ALSO HAVING THE POTENTIAL TO CAUSE HARM TO ICELAND-US DEFENSE RELATIONS EVEN UNDER THE PRESENT COALITION, ARE AS FOLLOWS: (A) RESUMPTION OF THE "COD WAR" WITH UK AND FRG THIS FALL SHOULD THE LOS CONFERENCE FAIL TO REACH AN ACCOMMODATION ON A 200 MILE ECONOMIC ZONE THIS YEAR. ALTHOUGH ICELAND DOES NOT REAR ANOTHER "MILITARY INVASION," IT IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE CONTINUED BLOCKING EEC TARIFF CONCESSIONS ON THEIR FISH BY A "NATO NATION." (B) ECONOMIC MEASURES THAT THE USG MIGHT CONTEMPLATE BECAUSE OF ECONOMIC SITUATION IN US WHICH WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT ICELAND'S INTERESTS, SUCH AS RESTRICTIONS AGAINST ICELANDIC AIRLINES (LOFTLEIDIR).

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AMEMBASSY ANKARA

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(C) FAILURE OF USG TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE MILITARY DEFENSE OF ICELAND (SEE PARA 3 ABOVE); AND (D) SEEMINGLY SLOWNESS OR FAILURE OF USG TO HONOR ITS COMMITMENTS AS STATED IN NEW MOU, PARTICULARLY THE SHIFT FROM AMERICAN MILITARY PERSONNEL TO ICELANDIC LABOR IN A TIMELY MANNER CONSISTENT WITH AVAILABILITY OF ICELANDIC LABOR.

6. USG HAS NOT TAKEN ANY ACTION WHICH SHOULD CAUSE APPREHENSION FOR POINTS (B) AND (C) IN PARA 5 ABOVE, ALTHOUGH IF THE AIR FORCE GOES THROUGH WITH ITS CONTEMPLATED TIMETABLE TO WITHDRAW THE AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING C-121S WITHOUT AN ADEQUATE SUBSTITUTE, WE CAN EXPECT A BOOMERANG
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ACTION AGAINST THE IDF AS A WHOLE. WE ARE ALL AWARE HOW SENSITIVE THE PRIME MINISTER AND HIS INDEPENDENCE PARTY ARE TO AIR DEFENSE OF ICELAND, BUT JUST A FEW DAYS AGO THE FOREIGN MINISTER (WHO IS ALSO VICE CHAIRMAN OF PROGRESSIVE PARTY) HAS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS 4-YEAR TENURE AS FOREIGN MINISTER EXPRESSED AS WELL HIS CONCERN, QUESTIONING WHETHER WE ARE PROVIDING ADEQUATE RADAR COVERAGE OF ICELAND. THE RECENTLY CONCLUDED SOVIET MILITARY EXERCISE IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC AND THE FREQUENT INCURSION OF SOVIET MILITARY AIRCRAFT WITHIN ICELAND'S ADIZ WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE HAVE UNNERVED SEVERAL PP LEADERS WHO HERETOFORE THOUGHT A SOVIET MILITARY THREAT TO ICELAND WAS A MYTH. ALTHOUGH THE STATUS QUO IN IDF STRUCTURE NEED NOT BE MAINTAINED INDEFINITELY, IT WOULD BEHOOVE THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE DEFENSE DEPT TO EVALUATE INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS OF THE MILITARY SERVICES WITH REGARD TO HOW THEY AFFECT SUPPORT FOR RETENTION OF THE IDF IN ICELAND.

7. OF GREAT CONCERN TO ME IS POINT (D) OF PARA 5 ABOVE. IF WE ARE NOT CAREFUL, WE FACE THE DANGER OF LOSING THE SUPPORT OF LABOR UNIONS AND FRIENDLY POLITICIANS. THERE IS CURRENTLY IN ICELAND SOME "UNEMPLOYMENT" AMONG SKILLED CARPENTERS, PLUMBERS AND ELECTRICIANS, AND THE PROSPECTS OF UNEMPLOYMENT DEVELOPING IN THE SERVICE INDUSTRIES. IN THIS COUNTRY WHERE THE TOTAL POPULATION IS ONLY 216,000, SMALL NUMBERS MAKE HEADLINES AND HAVE A GREAT POLITICAL IMPACT. WE ARE TOLD THAT TEN DISSATISFIED ICELANDERS CAN TRANSLATE INTO ABOUT 400 VOTES WHICH CAN BE ENOUGH TO SWING A DISTRICT ELECTION IN ICELAND'S PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION ELECTORAL SYSTEM. WHETHER ACCURATE OR NOT, WE DO KNOW BY EXPERIENCE THAT ONE UNEMPLOYED SKILLED ELECTRICIAN, WHO SEES OR HEARS OF AN AMERICAN SERVICEMAN PERFORMING "SELF-HELP" WORK ON THE BASE THAT HE ONCE DID, CAN COMMAND THE PERSONAL INTERVENTION ON HIS BEHALF OF THE PRIME MINISTER, FOREIGN MINISTER, ICELAND DEFENSE COUNCIL MEMBERS, LABOR UNION LEADERS AND THE MP FROM HIS DISTRICT* (COMMENT: IN ICELAND MOLEHILLS BECOME MOUNTAINS.) THE SLOWNESS WITH WHICH THE DEFENSE DEPT IS PROVIDING LOCAL PERSONNEL POSITIONS (CEILING POINTS) AND FUNDING SUPPORT TO PERMIT AN ORDERLY TRANSITION FROM AMERICAN MILITARY MANPOWER TO ICELANDIC CONTRACT OR DIRECT-HIRE LABOR CAN CAUSE US

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UNINTENDED PROBLEMS. TO OUR SUPPORTERS THE IDF HAS ALWAYS APPEARED AS A STABILIZING INFLUENCE IN THE LABOR MARKET. THIS ROLE IS PARTICULARLY SIGNIFICANT TODAY TO ENSURE NOT LOSING LABOR SUPPORT FOR IDF RETENTION. I DO NOT QUESTION

THE INTENTION OF DEFENSE DEPT IN HONORING THE MOU COMMITMENTS, AND I AM NOT UNMINDFUL OF THE BUDGETARY PROBLEMS OF THE DEFENSE DEPT, BUT WE ARE STILL IN A POLITICALLY SENSITIVE PERIOD HERE AND TIMELINESS AND FLEXIBILITY CAN SAVE US UNNECESSARY GRIDF.

8. ICELAND AND THE USSR: ICELAND'S RELATIONS WITH THE USSR ARE CONDITIONED TO A GREAT EXTENT BY ITS DEPENDENCE ON SOVIET OIL. AS A RESULT OF THIS DEPENDENCE, ICELAND SOMETIMES GOES OUT OF ITS WAY TO AVOID ACTIONS WHICH SOVIETS MIGHT CONSIDER OFFENSIVE. ON THE ECONOMIC SIDE, THE QUADRUPLING OF SOVIET OIL PRICES HAS CONTRIBUTED TO ICELAND'S BALANCE OF PAYMENTS PROBLEMS. ICELAND'S DEBT (A HEAVY ONE IN ICELANDIC TERMS) AMOUNTS TO SOMETHING OVER \$10 MILLION. ACCORDING TO THE NEW SOVIET AMBASSADOR, THE SOVIETS ARE NOT PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN HAVING IT PAID.

9. PSYCHOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL OFFENSIVE: IF ONE WANTED TO MAKE A CASE STUDY OF TEAMWORK BY USIA AND STATE/CU IN FOREIGN POLICY HE COULD NOT DO BETTER THAN LOOK AT ICELAND. THEIR RESPONSIVENESS DURING THE THREE DIFFICULT YEARS OF THE LEFTIST GOVT (1971-74) WAS OUTSTANDING. WHEN CREDITS ARE HANDED OUT FOR HAVING SAVED THE IDF, BOTH USIA AND CU WOULD STAND HIGH AS DESERVING RECIPIENTS. ONE CAN TRULY SAY ABOUT THEM THAT THEY WERE IN THE MAINSTREAM OF FOREIGN POLICY. THEIR IMPORTANT ROLES, HOWEVER, ARE NOT DIMINISHED AS A RESULT OF THE SINGING OF THE MOU. AN EQUALLY GREAT BURDEN IS NOW PLACED ON THEM TO HELP CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT IN ICELAND WHERE US-ICELAND DEFENSE AND POLITICAL RELATIONS WILL NOT AGAIN BE A MAJOR ELECTION ISSUE IN ICELAND. WE NEED THEIR INCREASED ASSISTANCE, TOO, IN COUNTERING THE NEW PSYCHOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL OFFENSIVE WHICH THE SOVIETS HAVE INDICATED THEY WILL LAUNCH HERE SOON TO ACCOMPLISH JUST THE OPPOSITE OF OUR OBJECTIVES. ALSO, FOR THE SAME REASONS AS THE SOVIETS, THE LEADERS OF THE COMMUNIST-DOMINATED PEOPLES ALLIANCE PARTY, WHICH STILL COMMANDS SUPPORT FROM 18 PERCENT OF THE VOTERS, HAVE RECENTLY CALLED ON PA MEMBERS TO JOIN IN

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AN ORGANIZED CAMPAIGN TO DISCREDIT THE US IN ALL ASPECTS OF US DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY. THE PARTY'S WELL-FINANCED PRESS HAS INCREASED ITS PROGRAM OF VILLIFICATION AND DISTORTION OF THE US, AND THE SOVIET NEW AGENCY NOVOSTI IS INCREASING ITS ICELANDIC LANGUAGE OUTPUT AND IS SHOWING SOME SUCCESS IN THE PLACEMENT OF ARTICLES IN THE NON-COMMUNIST LOCAL PRESS. USIS/REYKJAVIK MAY REQUIRE SOME STAFF RESTRUCTURING TO MEET THE NEW CHALLENGE, BUT MY IDEAS ON THIS WILL BE SUBMITTED TO USIA AFTER THE ARRIVAL OF THE NEW PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER LATTER PARTY OF MAY.

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AMEMBASSY ANKARA

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AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

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10. IDF COMMUNITY RELATIONS PROGRAM: THIS PROGRAM, TOO, DESERVES VERY HIGH PRAISE FOR ITS EFFECTIVENESS. BY CONDUCTING BRIEFINGS AND TOURS OF THE BASE AND BY ENCOURAGING CONTACT BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL GROUPS IN ICELAND AND AMONG THE MILITARY, THE IDF IS HELPING TO CREATE A BETTER PSYCHOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT FOR ITS PRESENCE IN ICELAND. THE INTEREST AMONG ICELANDERS IN PARTICIPATING IS INCREASING. FUNDS SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE MADE AVAILABLE TO THE IDF TO RESPOND.

11. PERSONNEL AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES: PRESENT STAFFING AND FUNDING FOR THE EMBASSY ARE SUFFICIENT FOR MEETING US INTERESTS AND OPERATING EXPENSES. WE ARE GRATEFUL TO EUR/
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EX NOT ONLY FOR OUTSTANDING BACKSTOPPING IN GENERAL, BUT ALSO FOR KEEPING IN MIND THAT ICELAND HAS THE HIGHEST RATE OF INFLATION IN EUROPE (51 PERCENT LAST YEAR). WITH REGARD TO OFFICIAL REPRESENTATIONAL FUNDS, WE SHARE THE SAME POSITION AS OTHER POSTS. HOWEVER, NO MATTER HOW BADLY OFF WE ARE, I DARE SAY IT DOES NOT COMPARE WITH THE GROSSLY INADEQUATE SUM AVAILABLE TO USIA WORLDWIDE, AND HENCE TO USIS/REYKJAVIK. I WOULD HOPE THAT SATE AND OTHER AGENCIES THAT HAVE OVERSEAS MISSIONS WILL WEIGH IN AND SUPPORT INCREASED FUNDS FOR USIA. THEIR REPRESENTATIONAL ACTIVITIES BENEFIT US ALL. WITH REGARD TO USIA STAFFING AND STRUCTURE, AS STATED EARLIER, I WOULD LIKE TO SUBMIT COMMENTS AFTER THE ARRIVAL OF THE NEW PAO.

12. EMBASSY-ICELAND DEFENSE FORCE RELATIONS: OUTSTANDING. ALL ELEMENTS OF THE MISSION IN REYKJAVIK AND THE IDF AT KEFLAVIK WORK AS CLOSELY-KNIT UNIT. THERE IS DAILY CONTACT AND EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION AND VIEWS AT ALL LEVELS. THIS IS BROUGHT ABOUT NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF THE POLITICALLY SENSITIVE NATURE OF THE IDF PRESENCE IN ICELAND, BUT BECAUSE OF THE PERSONS INVOLVED. REAR ADMIRAL RICH (COMICEDEFOR) SHARES WITH ME ALL HIGH LEVEL CONTACTS IN THE ICELANDIC GOVT AND HAS PROVED HIMSELF TO BE AS ABLE A DIPLOMAT AS HE IS A MILITARY COMMANDER.

13. EUR/NE BACKSTOPPING: I WOULD AGAIN USE SUPERLATIVES. WE IN ICELAND ARE FURTUNATE TO HAVE THE DEDICATED AND OUTSTANDING BACKSTOPPING OF THAT OFFICE. THEIR GUIDANCE, AS WELL AS RESPONSIVENESS TO OUR REQUESTS, HAS BEEN EXCELLENT.

14. CONCLUSION: THE USG IN ICELAND IS IN A LOT BETTER POSITION NOW THAN IT HAS BEEN IN THE PAST FOUR YEARS. WITH THE SAME INTEREST AND SENSITIVITY TO THE CURRENT PERIOD AS WAS SHOWN BY US DURING THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS, THERE IS NO REASON WHY WE CANNOT MAKE A FINE ICELAND-US RELATIONSHIP A PERMANENT STATE OF AFFAIRS.
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